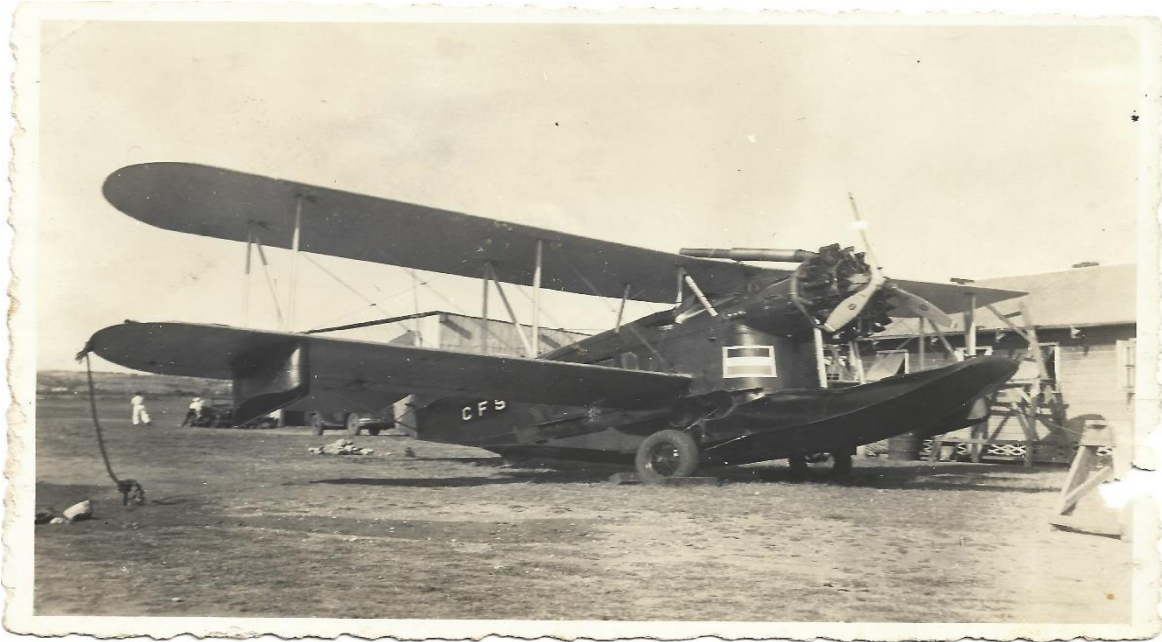


## **The First Commercial Airline of Aruba**



The Loening amphibian PJ-ZAA. In the background right Viccellio's residence, far back the hangar

**A Chronicle of the Caribbean Flying Service N.V.  
According to the correspondence between  
the Government of Aruba and the Central Government in Curaçao  
By Agustin Vrolijk (LL.M. Institute of Air & Space Law)**

The beginning of the 20th century brought significant changes to the islands of Curaçao and Aruba, spurred on by the establishment of a Dutch-English joint-venture oil refinery (Shell) in Curacao in 1914, and an American interest in Aruba (Standard Oil of New Jersey) in 1928 in connection with the discoveries of vast deposits of petroleum in Venezuela. These commercial and industrial developments stimulated activities, travel, and communication between Aruba and Curaçao, but also between the islands and the United States and Venezuela, as evidenced by a large influx of foreigners that followed these establishments. These migrant workers arrived at the shores of Aruba and Curacao by boat, as there was no other means of transportation available. In the following years, however, as the air transport services to and from Aruba and Curacao became established, the yearly passengers' arrivals grew to a combined several hundred thousand passengers.

Although there was occasional visit from aircraft in our bays, a structural operation was not in place to connect the mainland with these islands.

The establishment of the refineries in Curacao and Aruba attracted so many workers and businesspeople, gave the islands so much more importance to push for a modern and faster means of transportation.

In order to understand the complexities of the interests involved in this multi-decadal process, we should first lay out the political landscape leading up to the first air transport negotiations for the islands. Curaçao and Dependencies, as the Netherlands Antilles were referred to before 1955, held its central government in Willemstad, Curaçao since the islands were occupied by the Dutch West Indies Company. After many changes in occupiers, colonizers, these islands came back under the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Here, the Governor of Curacao represented the Head of State being it King or Queen and the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in The Hague. The Lieutenant Governors for the other territories -- Aruba, Bonaire, and Sint Maarten (which included Saba and Statia) -- were the direct subordinates of the local representatives for the Governor.

Outside of the Dutch Kingdom's context, we find that the strategic maneuvers executed by the major world power, especially the United States had direct impact on the region, and thus also on Curacao and its Dependencies. As concerns for the safety of the Panama Canal (under construction) and the development of Pan American Airways System grew, the Government of the United States of America reapplied the then century old Monroe Doctrine as its foreign policy: "America for the Americans".<sup>1</sup> This policy was more pronounced against the French and the Germans that became more active economically in Latin America.

The Versailles Treaty of June 28, 1919, formally ending the First World War, focused explicitly and forbade the aircraft manufacturing industry in Germany<sup>2</sup>. So, the Germans were forced to concentrate their efforts elsewhere, namely in Italy and South America. With respect to the latter, the Sociedad Colombo-Aleman de Transporte Aéreo (SCADTA)<sup>3</sup> was founded in Barranquilla, Colombia in 1919. In early 1925, a plot of land was bought in Curaçao which would serve as homebase, repair station, and bunker for the Caribbean operations of SCADTA<sup>4</sup>; most of the employees, crew, and mechanics at the time were German WWI veterans.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monroe\\_Doctrine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monroe_Doctrine): The States of the American continent are free and independent countries and henceforth not subjects for future colonization by European powers; interference with states in [North](#) or [South America](#) would be viewed as acts of aggression, requiring U.S. intervention.

<sup>2</sup> "Part V, Article 201. During the six months following the coming into force of the present Treaty, the manufacture and importation of aircraft, parts of aircraft, engines for aircraft, and parts of engines for aircraft, shall be forbidden in all German territory."

<sup>3</sup>: <http://www.scadta.de/Scadta-Fluggesellschaft/Scadta-Fluggesellschaft/Willkommen.html>

<sup>4</sup> See note 3

<sup>5</sup> Idem note 3

On July 4 of that year, a Dornier aircraft doing promotion for its services carried the Governor of Curaçao and Dependencies as passengers to Aruba with the intention to include these territories/islands in SCADTA's international schedule. However, the negotiations did not end on a positive note: external pressure exerted on the Governor, presumably by the Americans and Dutch protecting their own interests, resulted in SCADTA not being granted the required operating licenses.

In his letter to Governor Fruytier in Curaçao<sup>6</sup>, the Director of KLM Albert Plesman noticed the rise of SCADTA's air traffic in Colombia, as well as the strong development of the American and other air traffic in the region. Most notably, Pan American Airways (PAA) operated from its base in Miami to the Caribbean and Latin America and, like other airlines, employed harsh tactics to secure postal contracts between PAA and the local governments<sup>7</sup>; at one point, it was said that PAA grew to be more influential than the US State Department. Where there was a national airline established it became a subsidiary of PAA, or local airlines were established serve as feeder airlines to assemble passengers and mail in central cities to link up with PAA's international flights. A good example of these tactics can be found in connection to Compagnie Générale Aeropostale, which established an air-sea-air service and later setting up subsidiary airlines in South America.

Around 1928, its strategic plans included moving up north to the Caribbean.<sup>8</sup> This did not last, however: by 1932, the airline abandoned all operations and the subsidiary company in Venezuela was taken over by the local government and became Aeropostal.

Mr. Plesman warned for the political risk of the increasing importance of American air traffic in Curaçao and regretted that The Netherlands had no share in the fast development of the air traffic in Curaçao. As such, he proposed the establishment of a ground handling company and representation of the foreign airlines in Curaçao, so "that we remain boss in our own house"<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, while describing the advantages of air transportation to and from Curaçao, he carefully requested the Governor to consider subsidizing a Dutch airline<sup>10</sup>.

In reaction to this, the Government of the Netherlands sent two experts to the Dutch West Indies to advise the Governments of Suriname and Curaçao on the legal, technical, and commercial matters of international aviation, as well as to analyze the possibility of establishing airlines under the Dutch flag in the Caribbean<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> 5 December 1928. Lanternu16 Centraal Historisch Archief Curaçao.

<sup>7</sup> Idem 6

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.memoire-aeropostale.com/index.php?pg=dates>

<sup>9</sup> Idem 6

<sup>10</sup> Idem 6

<sup>11</sup> 1934-1944, KLM's Caribbean Decade; The story of the Operations of Royal Dutch Airline in the West since December 1934, pp.8,9

Because of the increasing economic activities, ad hoc operations of foreign aircraft to these islands caused their presence to remain quite an object of interest for the local population. The political, economic, and technical regimes aligned to spur a businessman and an employee of Lago Oil & Transport Company in Aruba to start an airline, the Caribbean Flying Service. In a letter dated July 5, 1932, Manuel Viana and James Madison Massey requested the Governor of Curaçao to allow flights over Aruba with one or two passengers, with an option to expand the transport capacity and educational facilities in Aruba and Curaçao should the regional outlook prove to be positive. The letter was sent through the Lieutenant Governor of Aruba, who applauded the plan to start air services between the islands<sup>12</sup>.

Of the regimes required for the Caribbean Flying Service to operate, the legal regime was the last to be solidified when the Dutch Kingdom's Aviation Law became the basis for civil aviation in Curaçao in the 1930s<sup>13</sup>. From this document, two articles can be highlighted that were particularly pertinent to the establishment of the Caribbean Flying Service. First, Article 6 prohibits the use of aircraft within the Kingdom that do not bear the national registration markings, unless they were of Dutch origin. Second, on commercial air transportation, Article 11 distinguishes two situations: one where transport was governed by the particulars of this Article, and a second where the Article was superseded by a separate treaty. In case of the former, a permit was required from, or on behalf of, the Government of the Colonies (in Willemstad Curaçao in order to operate if the company's management office was established within the Kingdom. Should it be from outside the Kingdom, a permit could be obtained through the Ministry of Water Management in the Hague. In either case, lacking a specific treaty, it was forbidden to operate a transport business service without the aforementioned permit.

To Viana's and Massey's good fortune, a suitable aircraft was already stationed in Aruba, and, according to the Lieutenant Governor, the single engine, three-seater Curtiss Wright monoplane was in good condition.

The harbormaster of the Colonial Government, Mr. W. Gauw, with office in Curacao who advised the Governor in Curaçao on aviation matters, proposed to come to Aruba to inspect the aircraft. Prior to his inspection, he noted in a letter that the aircraft had to be registered and have an airworthiness certificate issued, (but only after a hefty sum was charged for these documents). In his words, the fee was required, because "by doing this the government accepts responsibility and renders many services." However, as the petitioners were of Portuguese and American nationality, this could not be accomplished as prescribed by the law. To circumvent this, Gauw suggested that the aircraft be operated solely in Aruba without a nationality<sup>14</sup>, and thus without being registered according to international regulations.

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<sup>12</sup> Letter dated 14 July 1932 No. 1336 and attachment from the lieutenant Governor I. Wagenmaker

<sup>13</sup> Aviation Law of 30 July 1926; Staatsblad van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden No. 249

<sup>14</sup> Letter dated 21 July 1932, No. 206 to the Governor

It was not clear where Gauw found support for his advice. As mentioned above, Article 6 of the Aviation Law specifically forbade aviation activities employing aircraft that were not registered (either in the Netherlands or in a foreign country), and lacking a registration marks. Furthermore, though Chapter 3 of the Aviation Law gave details about the registration process, there was no requirement with respect to the person, legal or natural, requesting registration of an aircraft.

Not allowing themselves to be discouraged, Viana and Massey partnered with James Lee Hathaway on a new plan with the following highlights<sup>15</sup>:

1. The establishment of Caribbean Flying Service Limited Liability Company.
2. The use of a two-passenger monoplane for shows, transporting passengers, and pilot training.
3. The purchase of a 10-passengers amphibian aircraft for use between Aruba and Curaçao, with potential expansion to Maracaibo and La Guayra in Venezuela, and other cities if necessary.
4. Due to the high cost of the amphibian aircraft (approximately 50,000 guilders in 1932), an a priori guarantee was necessary from the Colonial Government that:
  - a. CFS would be permitted to operate to the destinations mentioned in (3).
  - b. Such a privilege would not be given to any other person or company while CFS was in existence.
  - c. CFS could sell and transfer that privilege to any other company approved by the Government.
5. The exclusive, irrevocable privilege to transport mail to the destinations on the CFS schedule, unless it could be proven that CFS was unfit to perform this postal service.

Additionally, the Governor was informed that the pilot and instructor, Adolph Joseph Viccellio, would be in Aruba to begin flight training activities. Lastly, the plan concluded by saying that local businesses would benefit from the quick services provided to passengers and mail; thus, making Aruba a more prosperous country. This was, of course, in large part dependent on the cooperation and support that CFS would receive from the Colonial Government in Curaçao.

In the end, Gauw's inspection visit to Aruba did not occur; during the night of 22 September 1932, strong winds slammed the Curtiss Wright aircraft against a wall of the air field station and it was so damaged that the owners decided to buy a new aircraft.

The harbormaster was very critical of the new plans and request. He was against operating regularly over sea with a monoplane without radio communications. The airfield in Aruba (in Savaneta on the shore west of the refinery) was not adequate for instruction as it was not useful at high tide or on rainy days and the terrain was open.

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<sup>15</sup> Mr. Viana's letter dated 27 September 1932 to the Governor, National Archives, Curaçao

He was against granting monopoly rights to CFS. Almost all airlines operated with subsidies from the governments, were losing money.

The local Government had no funds to build a good airfield, nor could it grant subsidies to this limited liability company CFS. It was almost sure that the Aruban airline company will operate with losses, and this will have repercussions on the safety<sup>16</sup>.

The advice of the Finance Administrator was more discouraging. Besides that, there was no money for the airfield in Aruba nor Curaçao, he saw no feasibility in a company that has to carry passengers, mail and cargo between Aruba and Curaçao. He didn't see the possibility that the airline will obtain the permit from Venezuela to operate to Maracaibo and La Guayra.

If the Standard Oil was not supporting Caribbean Flying Services, it will surely fail or it will carry out illegal activities. As all applicants were foreigners of whom he didn't know their backgrounds, "and in these times one cannot but be skeptical towards a company managed by unknown foreigners". Should the Standard Oil not support this project, then he advises to be careful not to give facilities to unknown foreigners.

If they have support, then there could be no objection to decide positively on the traffic between Aruba and Curaçao and Maracaibo where Standard Oil and Shell have many interests and where the airline can earn some money.<sup>17</sup>

Four days later the Lieutenant Governor of Aruba confirmed that the LAGO Manager was not behind this airline<sup>18</sup>.

This skepticism leans more towards negativism and lack of appreciation for the efforts by the entrepreneurs. Apparently, the Venezuelan government considered the concession of a foreign airline not a question that had to be dealt with along the official or diplomatic channels, but purely as a commercial affair and that was how that Government was going to deal with the company concerned.

Diplomatic assistance or intervention was considered undesirable<sup>19</sup>.

Mid November the harbormaster Gauw was in Aruba and reported to the Governor that he inspected the aircraft - a Bird double decker - and spoke to Mr. Viana and a young 22-year-old pilot, captain Adolph Joseph Viccellio. A test flight was successfully performed by Viccellio. Mr. Gauw gave an explanation why a monopoly for CFS was not possible. For the airline and aircraft to have the Dutch nationality, they must establish a limited liability company so as to get the concession to start operation; a flying school would be possible when the students after 30 flying hours could get the license from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale. Therefore

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<sup>16</sup> Letter dated 6 October 1932 No. 279 from Mr. W. Gauw to the Governor, National Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Letter dated 11 October 1932 No. 979 by Financial Administrator Mr. H. Schotborgh, Nat'l Archives.

<sup>18</sup> Telegram 15-10-1932 to the Governor

<sup>19</sup> 1934-1944 KLM's Caribbean Decade; The Story of the Operations of Royal Dutch Airlines in the West Indies since December 1934, p. 16

Mr. Gauw proposed to the Governor to file his and Viccellio's names as sportcommissoners (examiners) with the Dutch branch of FAI. He himself had an FAI-license<sup>20</sup>already.

After this encounter Mr. Viana sent a letter to the Governor requesting a temporary concession to operate the aircraft pending the notary work and approval of statutes of the company "Caribbean Flying Service N.V. (Caribische Vliegdiens Onderneming N.V.) The temporary concession was necessary as the notary needed one to one and a half month to have the statutes ready for the Governor to approve; in the meantime, he could start operations and avoid more losses for his company.<sup>21</sup>

In his telegram to the lieutenant Governor of Aruba the Governor authorized temporary operations in Aruba for a period of 2 months as of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1932. The concession conditions were to be set by the harbormaster.<sup>22</sup>

The mistrust left by WWI did not disappear, especially here where you have many foreigners from different nationalities; and an aircraft was still a new instrument with potentialities that were not fully known or perceived to be a threat to national security.

This was also what we sense in the reaction of the military Commander to the request of Mr. Viana and partners. In his letter to the Governor, he agreed to the granting of the permission to CFS under the condition that company sticks to the following conditions:

1. The CFS shall report monthly on the number of aircraft, amount of fuel, oil and parts, size of repair station, number of students, their nationalities, age, and behavior, how far these students have progressed.

The commander wrote: "I'm very skeptical to the giving of flying instructions to foreigners in this territory and propose that an application of an incoming student be screened by a commission consisting of the lieutenant governor, a detective, the harbormaster, and the local military commander". All costs will be borne by CFS and the outcome was secret.

2. Furthermore CFS shall have all pilots examined by a Dutch medical doctor, no aerial photos can be taken without special permission, when developing the photos, a Dutch expert shall be permitted to be present; a Dutch expert will be allowed to inspect the aircraft regularly; authorities will have unrestricted permission to enter the premises, etc.
3. Should martial law be proclaimed than all operations shall cease immediately, and all facilities will be under control of the government (military); the requested permit will be revoked without any motivation; under no condition should CFS have its own radio station on the ground.

But after all he also found Mr. Viana to be a trustful person.

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<sup>20</sup> Letter No. 302 dated November 17, 1932, to the Governor

<sup>21</sup> Letter No. 1989 dated November 19, 1932,

<sup>22</sup> Telegram registered No. 3759

To arm CFS aircraft with an automatic machine gun will take 3 days and a good amount of ammunition will overload the aircraft and for this the 300m landing strip was short; throwing bombs by hands was always possible without the special aiming device.<sup>23</sup>

Ten days later the captain proposed to the Governor to also include in the commission the consul of the State of the nationality of the incoming student.

Rumors have reached the Governor in the beginning of February 1933 that instruction flights were been flown with students. The lieutenant governor confirmed that and stopped them because there was no permit for these flights. At the same time CFS requested an extension of the temporary permit (given in November 1932 and which expired on the first of February). Attached to their letter to the Governor<sup>24</sup> the three entrepreneurs Viana, Massey and Hathaway sent the draft statutes for the establishment of the Caribbean Flying Service N.V. The Governor was asked for a non-objection in principle, which request was approved.

A day later Viana screamed for help; he was suffering great losses as all operations have been suspended until the bylaws were approved by the Governor. The statutes seem to be no problem for the company but permission to operate as an airline still awaited a long process. He wanted the harbormaster to intervene to rush the papers or get a new (temporary) permit. The next day a telegram came from the Governor requesting the details of all students of the flying course. In total there were 9 students, ages running from 16 to 36 all of American nationality.<sup>25</sup>

By decision of 27 February 1933 the Governor granted a provisional permit to Caribbean Flying Service to operate between Aruba and Curaçao and to have a training school. All remarks made by the Military Command were incorporated in the permit. It was concluded that in case of an accident the pilot and Mr. Viana would be responsible for the technical respectively liable for the financial aspects.

Through the Minister of Colonies in The Hague the Governor informed the Minister of Water Management of the process in progress to grant the permit to CFS.

In his reaction to the Minister of Colonies the Minister of Water Management in charge of aviation, informed that as a test case it was recommendable to grant permission to Caribbean Flying Service to operate an air service as proposed by the Governor.<sup>26</sup>

In his second reaction<sup>27</sup> the Minister commented on the training school.

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<sup>23</sup> Letter dated 12 December 1932, No. 131 from Captain Th.C.W. Michaëlis, National Archives

<sup>24</sup> Letter dated 11 February 1933, National Archives

<sup>25</sup> Letter and attachment dated 22 February 1933 from the lieutenant Governor to the Governor

<sup>26</sup> Note dated 17 March 1933 attachment to letter dated 19 April 1933 from Department of Colonies to the Governor.

<sup>27</sup> Attachment dated 29 March 1933 to letter mentioned in footnote 16.



The F.A.I. licenses were no longer used; the Kingdom and Colonies were bound by the Paris Convention<sup>28</sup> and Article 12<sup>29</sup> was applicable. Furthermore, that Article gave the minimum requirements to which the crew of an aircraft has to comply with. The “*Regeling Toezicht Luchtvaart*” gave the national regulations for licensing and medical examination. The Governor got a copy of the Convention and regulations to apply these in the case of CFS.

On Wednesday May 17 Mr. Viana visited the Lieutenant Governor to inform him that on Sunday 20th the second aircraft will arrive in Aruba. He would like to make a trip to Curaçao to have it inspected and speak to the Secretary of the Government about the starting of the operation of air services and compliance with regulations.

In the letter sent by harbormaster to the Governor on 6 June 1933 we can read that because of strong gusts of wind it was not possible to instruct the students to land and consequently the classes were suspended, and it was not urgent any more to come up with regulations.

Via his connections with the Lago Refinery, he could buy a single engine Loening aircraft from LAGOVEN from Maracaibo in August.

In September Mr. Viana wrote a letter to the harbormaster informing him that he purchased an 8-seater Loening amphibian. “Our pilot will arrive here this week and after a complete check of motor and ship we will be ready to start operations. As the papers [for operations] pertaining to the Caribbean Flying Service were not quite in order and approved I would very much appreciate you arranging a permit to fly temporarily. It would be greatly appreciated as there has been so much money spent without any revenues”<sup>30</sup>

Well, this backfired. It seems that the harbormaster lost his temper with Caribbean Flying Service. He wrote to the Governor<sup>31</sup> that:

1. Since the expiration of the temporary permit Mr. Viana did not take any further steps to finish the paperwork of the limited liability company.
2. Up to now no airline even under the favorable conditions had proved to run profitable and independent of subsidies.
3. Mr. Viana was operating without subsidies, was losing money and the stubbornness with which he continues with his plans, gave the impression that he was an aviation enthusiast for whom losses do not matter, or on a different

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<sup>28</sup> Convention Relating to the Regulation of Aerial Navigation Signed at Paris, October 13, 1919 (Paris Convention).

<sup>29</sup> Article 12. The commanding officer, pilots, engineers, and other members of the operating crew of every aircraft shall, in accordance with the conditions laid down in Annex E, be provided with certificates of competency and licenses issued or rendered valid by the State whose nationality the aircraft possesses.

<sup>30</sup> Letter dated 20 September 1933

<sup>31</sup> Letter dated 21 September 1933 No. 229 Spoed

than normal legal way can cover his costs. (Mr. Gauw had “heard rumors” about this. Probably rumors did not reach him that Mr. Viana had his own company Viana Auto Supply in Sanicolas).

His advice was:

1. Not to grant any permission before there was a proper legal basis and the legislation was in place, making it possible to take stiff legal measures when violations were committed.
2. The Lieutenant Governor of Aruba had to supervise the prohibition to fly and this was far from being effective up to now; and measures must be taken to make flying impossible. “Up to now this leaves much to be desired”. The fact that via an unofficial way (not from the lieutenant governor) he came to know that Mr. Viana had another aircraft, was a sign that a better official communication was surely necessary.

Mr. Gauw spat his bile on to the lieutenant Governor. Apparently, the Governor himself was absent and the Acting Governor sent a pressing letter to Aruba.

The complaints against the lieutenant Governor were:

1. He omitted to inform the Governor (Acting) that Mr. Viana has a plane in Aruba with the intention to operate from here.
2. He omitted to inform that a plane departed from Aruba to Maracaibo.

Both situations have surprised the (Acting) Governor unpleasantly. “We don’t have to inform you that flying out of the Netherlands territory without the permission from the competent authority could involve the Government in serious unpleasantness, consequently, could force the Government and Governor to all kinds of less positive declarations. May I ask you not to let these activities unreported and definitely not to grant any permit to fly from Aruba. I command strict supervision on Viana under the present circumstances”<sup>32</sup>

The same day he sent a telegram to Aruba refusing permission to Mr. Viana to use the aircraft. It seems that this Acting Governor was the Financial Administrator that made discouraging remarks on the company in the past, see footnote 17.

Here he was altogether wrong, and the lieutenant Governor of Aruba fired back strongly stating<sup>33</sup>:

1. Up to present he never gave permission to any aircraft to fly from Aruba to anywhere.
2. Several aircraft of Lago Oil & Transport Company in Maracaibo came to Aruba and after doing business returned to Maracaibo. “As I understood from Mr. Cooke [probably Mr. Thomas S. Cooke vice president of Lago Refinery] this airtransport has been discussed in the past with the Governor and I don’t

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<sup>32</sup> Letter dated 22 September 1933, No. 3094 from Acting Governor H. Schotborgh

<sup>33</sup> Letter dated 27 September 1933 No. 1385

know otherwise than that it has been agreed upon”.

3. On the 30th of Augustus the passenger’s aircraft “Mongo” arrived from Maracaibo to be dismantled and sent to America as it has been taken out of service. The new aircraft that was to replace the old one was assembled immediately after arrival and flew to its station in Maracaibo. “To be quite on the safe side I checked with the manager in San Nicolas (Lago Refinery) if the arrival of this aircraft has been prepared with the authorities on the other side of the shore. The answer was positive”.
4. On the remark that Mr. Viana has mounted an aircraft with the intention to operate flights the lieutenant Governor reminded the Acting Governor that as per letter dated February 27, 1933, No. 560/54 the Governor gave permission to Aruba Caribbean Flying Service for the exploitation of one or more aircraft.
5. In his letter dated May 19 Mr. Viana mentioned the coming of the second aircraft and the request to fly this aircraft (8-seater amphibian) to Curaçao for inspection. This request was approved. Though this aircraft never arrived as flying from California to Mexico it was confiscated in Mexico because of missing documents.
6. The aircraft that was being dismantled was bought by Mr. Viana in Venezuela. It was decided that the operation would not be expanded if the statutes and regulations were not in place. There was strict vigilance on the activities; Mr. Viana had been reminded of the need for the establishment of the company. The notary did not seem to have any clue with this; therefore Mr. Viana wanted to travel/fly to Curaçao.

Finally, the lieutenant Governor hoped that his Excellency could conclude from the above that he handled the situation with due earnestness. The last sentence in his letter was: “I’m well aware that I have not been negligent in this case”.

There were two developments that probably were of influence that was causing irritation and frictions between the Government of Aruba and the (Central) Government of Curacao and Dependencies. Aruba has been pleading for a better political and administrative treatment; there was the rise of the struggle to be separated from Curaçao. A sense of recognition of not being so dependent on or subordinated to politicians and administrators from Curaçao. With the establishment of the refinery in Aruba, the island economy was flourishing; local politicians and businesspeople wanted to have more authority and freedom to run their own businesses. This irritated the establishment in the Central Government in Willemstad and therefore cooperation with Aruba was not the first thing in mind.

The Great Depression in the USA where many lost money, jobs, properties also had its effects on the commercial activities on these islands. There was a sense of insecurity economically while it was also rumbling in Europe.

The papers were silent what happened after this, and it remained silent till February 1934 when the lieutenant Governor sent a letter with attached the draft statutes/ deed of enactment of the Caribbean Flying Service N.V.

The participants in the company would be Mr. Adolf Theodoor Dirk Helenus de Boer, Mr. Gustaaf Adolf Kuiperi and Mr. Manuel Viana, all Aruban businessmen.

A. The goals of the company were:

1. To operate commercial aerservices from Aruba to surrounding places for the transportation of persons, goods, and mail.
2. To give flying instructions including performing flights for the flight training.
3. To operate flights as a sports event.
4. To build airfields, hangars, and stations and make use of these, and to perform all in the most extensive meaning of what related to above mentioned company.

B. The company was established for a duration of 15 years with the nominal capital of fl. 50.000,00 and shares divided in percentage of 38, 38 and, 24 for Mr. Viana.

In his reaction the Governor approved the draft per decision of 26 February 1934, no. 270, so that the Caribbean Flying Service N.V. was officially established based on the Articles 36 and 37 of the Code of Commerce.

In a letter to the Governor the shareholders of Caribbean Flying Service N.V. applied for the permission to operate with the amphibian aircraft, under the conditions to be set by the Governor, for the time being to Curaçao and, later when the necessary measures have been taken, also to coastal cities of the neighbouring republics for the transportation of passengers and mail.<sup>34</sup>

On this petition the harbormaster wrote to the Governor:

1. The flying field of the CFS was hardly suitable for a little training aircraft, and definitely dangerous for an amphibian with 7 passengers.
2. The saliña, close by the field although far from ideal, was usable under favorable circumstances [no rain]. As this was a public road it must be closed off, if permission was given to use this. The best takeoff and landing possibilities were on the water. [The sandy field in Savaneta was the landing field and also where Mr. Vicellio had his residence and office].
3. When giving permission to fly between Aruba and Curaçao it was important for control and safety precautions to communicate the departure and arrival. It was also important to determine in advance which measures must be taken in case of emergency and missing situations.
4. Permission to operate foreign flights should not be granted for now.
5. It was desirable to finalize the Curaçao Aviation Act.
6. The flight training had been stopped last year as the field and the strong gust made Aruba unsuitable for a flying school. It was necessary to control who was being trained.

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<sup>34</sup> Petition attached to Lieutenant Governor's letter dated 21 April 1934.

The Governor decided in conformity with advice 1. above and instructed the harbormaster to draft a proposal for supervision by customs, police, and doctors in case of emergencies and missing<sup>35</sup>.

In May the Governor instructed the harbormaster to draft a concession for Caribbean Flying Service N.V. Details of specific issues should be consulted with police, customs, post office and healthcare service.

Finishing his letter, the harbormaster wrote: “In view of the coming of the KLM I find it not desirable to grant a more extensive concession nor a long-term postal contract”.

The draft reads:

1. The concession was to operate direct flights between Aruba and Curaçao.
2. For these flights the flying field at Hato and the plot near the coast at Savonet [Savoneta] [Savaneta] in Aruba can be used free of charge.

There were also conditions and other requirements for radio communications, logbooks, requirements of airworthiness, aerial photography and demonstration flights have to requested from the local chief of police; flight instruction can only be given to persons who have the permit from the local chief of police.

In his decision of 29 May 1934 the Governor informed the Lieutenant Governor that he has no objection based on the conditions of the concession to permit Caribbean Flying Service N.V. to operate an air service between Aruba and Curaçao “..... with the understanding though that as soon as the KLM aircraft has arrived here, that will probably be here by the end of the year, the government could withdraw the permit [concession] from Caribbean Flying Service”.

Although the law has not been changed yet certain aspects were already being adapted and applied to this process of granting the concession.

The authority that was vested in the Government and Minister of Water Management in The Hague was to be transferred to the Governor (=Government) in Willemstad<sup>36</sup>.

The new law in Article 6 calls for the establishment of an aircraft registry by the Governor; aircraft registered in a registry in the Kingdom will be a Netherlands aircraft, Article 1. In this way we see the nationality mark for The Netherlands was PH and PJ for Curaçao.

The title of Article 13 was *Airlines (Luchtlijnen)* though it regulates the transport by aircraft of persons and/or goods for remuneration between two places within the territory of Curaçao (= six islands of the Dutch West Indies). This airtransport was only permitted under a concession granted by the Governor. This concession was granted only to:

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<sup>35</sup> Letter dated 26 April 1934, No. 150

<sup>36</sup> Royal Decree 4 July 1935, Publicatieblad 1935 No. 96 General Regulations for the Civil Aviation in Curaçao

- a. Dutch citizens.
- b. a limited liability company or legally incorporated union of which all who have a leading position in the company must be of Netherlands nationality.

Article 14 dictates that for the establishment of an international air service with a point in the territory of Curaçao as origin, transit or destination it was necessary to have a permit from the Governor.

These articles applied when there was no treaty in place.

The amphibian aircraft flew to Curaçao for inspection and as the aircraft had no radio installation on board yet, it had to fly without passengers. Per telegram of 7 June 1934 the Governor informed the lieutenant governor that the aircraft has passed the inspection and could operate passengers' flights under the conditions sent on earlier date.

The harbormaster handed the airworthiness certificate of the Loening to the Governor for presentation to CFS. For the nationality marks for aircraft will be PJ-Z as for ships the registration began with PJ-A<sup>37</sup>. The CFS's aircraft was registered PJ-ZAA.

The harbormaster's report recommended telephone communication for the little building in Hato and hangar in Aruba; cleaning of the flying field in Hato and improvement of road to Hato. " In view of the coming of KLM these improvements have to be done anyhow". For now, every owner should protect his own aircraft, [for now!!].

Mr. Gauw made a scenario in case of missing of the aircraft on the route Aruba - Curaçao. The message should go to all ships: "Airplane amphibian PJ-ZAA made forced landing between Curaçao and Aruba, assistance wanted".

In his letter to the lieutenant governor the Governor informed of his decision to grant to Caribbean Flying Service concession to operate direct flights between Aruba and Curaçao<sup>38</sup>. The conditions were those proposed by the harbormaster.

Almost ten weeks before the start of the operations Amigoe di Curacao wrote:

*"The Caraibische Vliegdiens Compagnie (CVC) (Caribbean Airline Company) has entered into an agreement to maintain a scheduled air connection between Curaçao and Aruba. Every Monday and Thursday there will be round trip flights. The oneway price is 25 ½ fl., both ways will be 50 fl. In addition to this regular scheduled route there will also be an opportunity for excursions from one to the other island on other days. With at least 5 or 6 passengers, the plane will also make the trip on Saturday and maybe on the remaining days of the week. Travelers pay 30 guilders each way and are entitled to carry 30 lbs. of luggage".*

With this concession Caribbean Flying Service completed all requirements to operate officially as an airline. The first commercial flight to Curaçao took place on 28 August 1934.

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<sup>37</sup> Letter dated 8 June 1934, No. 201

<sup>38</sup> Letter dated 14 June 1934, No. 1479a

On this occasion first day envelopes were flown over to Curacao. The schedule was 2 to 3 frequencies per week to Curaçao and the load factor to Curaçao was higher than return flight. Captain Viccellio was the chief pilot and students fly as co-pilots<sup>39</sup>.

One remark heard from a well-known person in the aviation field was that his father was asked why he was not sending his letter to families in Curaçao by airmail. This man's answer was typical of that era: "I have more faith in the boat".



One of the first day envelopes donated in 1994 by Mr. Viccellio. It can be seen in Archivo Nacional Aruba

In his October report to the Governor Mr. Viana informed that the airline has been forced to cancel or run late schedules on days that the tides rose and covered the airfield (in Savaneta).

In the meantime, preparations were in full swing for the coming of KLM that finally took place in December 1934. On December 22nd the SNIP aircraft registered PH-AWAS landed in Hato and "... the next day a short trip was made to Aruba. A landing field was planned, and a start had been made with cleaning the ground. However, on its first visit the SNIP had to make use of a strip of solid beach near Savoneta [just where CFS was operating], a few miles from the Lago Oil Refinery. The population of Aruba showed its acclaim to no lesser degree than that of the people of Surinam and Curaçao"<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Gerard Cassius, *The Antillean Navigator* Augustus 1989, page 39

<sup>40</sup> See footnote 13 page 15

And suddenly in December the harbormaster informed the Governor that according to the telegram from the Lieutenant Governor of Aruba, Caribbean Flying Service has stopped operation in connection with the coming of KLM.

He further advised the Governor when revoking the concession, to thank CFS for the safe and regular service provided. Though he found no grounds for awarding a compensation <sup>41</sup> [for costs CFS spent on the infrastructure].

Also, the agent for CFS in Curaçao sent similar message to the Governor informing him that CFS has decided to stop its flight services between Aruba and Curaçao<sup>42</sup>.

Based on this information the governor revoked per Government Decision of 5 January 1935 the concession dated 14 June 1934 granted to Caribbean Flying Service N.V. to operate direct flights between Aruba and Curaçao.<sup>43</sup>

In his last letter to the Governor Mr. Viana exposed some of his thoughts<sup>44</sup>.

The airline started to make money only shortly before the arrival of KLM's SNIP. But this was too late to recuperate the huge loss suffered. He sent a letter to KLM offering his two aircraft and inventory for sale. Furthermore, the agent representing the airline in Curacao demanded an exorbitant fee for the short time it represented the airline.

Mr. Viana concluded his letter:

“We feel it was our civic duty to do all within our power to advance the Curaçao Colony [Curacao and Dependencies]. As we look around us and see worldwide turmoil and governments' unrest, we are happy to be associated with a stable and sympathetic government. It was our sincere intention to show this appreciation at every opportunity”.

In his letter Mr. Viana asked the Governor to support his offer made to KLM (in attachment) to buy “our entire airplane equipment and in this connection, we are giving you the first opportunity of securing this equipment. It is our belief that you can very profitably operate these planes as the flying public has confidence in their safe operation”.

Apparently, KLM did not react on the offer and the aircraft Loening remained to be prey of the weather. The engine was sent back to the USA and the propellor for many years had been adorning the clubhouse of Aruba Flying Club in De Vuyst, Sanicolas.

So, the Caribbean Flying Service foundered practically without glory; it deserved a better appreciation and has surely contributed to the success of KLM by being the first and so to make the public familiar with airtransport.

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<sup>41</sup> Letter dated 27 December 1934, No. 378

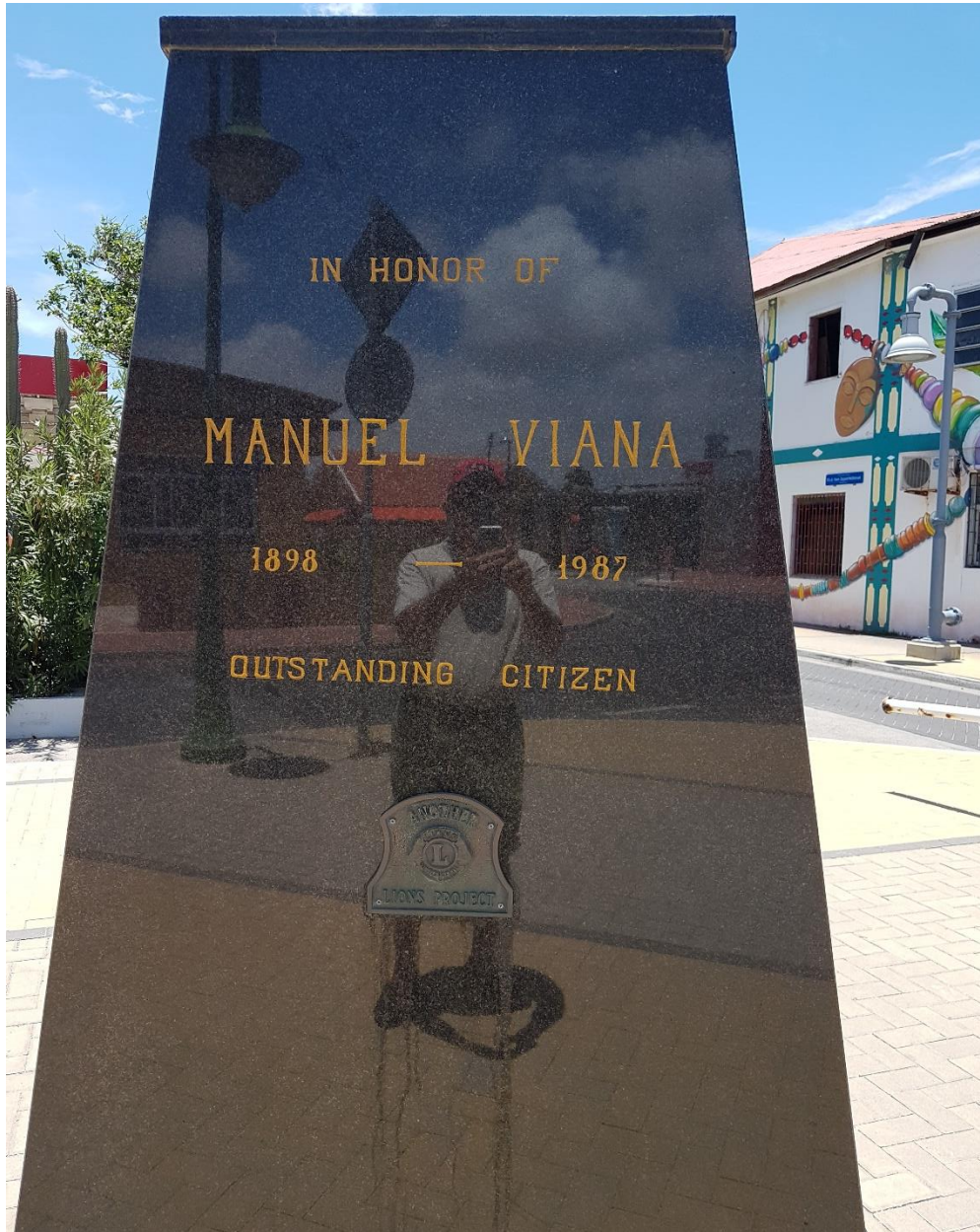
<sup>42</sup> Letter dated 28 December 1934 from S.E.L. Maduro & Sons

<sup>43</sup> Letter dated 5 January, 1935 No. 696 Government's Beschikking No. 15

<sup>44</sup> Letter dated 6 April 1935 and attachment to the Governor B.W.Th. van Slobbe.



In his letter dated 17 October 1994<sup>45</sup> Mr. Viccellio wrote that much later after the demise of the first commercial airline of Aruba, Caribbean Flying Service “ ... I started flying for KLM”. One of his students, William Ewart started the flying club with an air strip inside the refinery.



Mr. Viana who pioneered the first Aruba Commercial Airline. Monument at the entrance of mainstreet Sanicolas

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<sup>45</sup> For the international celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ICAO (1994) we requested A.J. Viccellio to write his experience in Aruba